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C O N F I D E N T I A L LJUBLJANA 000432

SIPDIS

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USNATO (BDEWALT AND JOPPENHEIM), SHAPE (JSHIVNEN AND  
CHARTFORD), EUR/RPM (RCARLAND), EUR/NCE (AHENDERSON);

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/28/2017  
TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#) [SI](#)  
SUBJECT: KEEPING SLOVENIA IN IRAQ: HELP NEEDED

REF: A. LJUBLJANA 418

[1](#)B. LJUBLJANA 285

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 9.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary. Slovenia's active support for coalition efforts in Iraq could terminate after only eighteen months. With its commitment of four troops halved to two by the reduction of billets at NTM-I earlier this year and the two remaining trainers scheduled to return home in August, it is critical that the GOS be pushed from all sides to continue to participate at NTM-I. While information on current open billets at NTM-I is available to Slovenian officials, there is little movement within the Slovenian government to pursue further contributions. Without strong encouragement from U.S. and NATO officials and a renewed effort to help Slovenia find a way to match up its potential contributions with SHAPE/NTM-I's current needs, it is likely Slovenian involvement in NTM-I will conclude in August. End Summary.

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WORKING LEVEL PARTNERS FIGHTING BUREAUCRATIC APATHY  
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[1](#)3. (U) In February, Slovenia's contribution to NTM-I was halved by normal force reductions, leaving just two trainers in Iraq. The two Slovenes currently at NTM-I are scheduled to return to Slovenia in August. Though senior GOS officials continue to say they support efforts in Iraq, media reports quoted Slovenian Armed Forces spokesman Simon Korez in mid May saying the two soldiers currently in Iraq will not be replaced when they depart.

[1](#)4. (C) With information from USNATO's helpful response to reftel B and subsequent emails, COM, DCM, DATT, and PolMilOff reached out to leadership and working level staffers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Ministry of Defense (MOD) over the past two months to encourage the Government of Slovenia (GOS) to maintain its current presence in Iraq and continue to look for substantive ways to contribute to coalition efforts. At lunch with Prime Minister Janez Jansa June 14 (reftel A), COM again brought up the topic of Slovenia's commitment to Iraq, and the Prime Minister again stated Slovenia's willingness to stay in the fight so long as the training profile remained the same and would not require renewed parliamentary approval. MFA Security Policy Department Head Stanislav Vidovic, however, told DCM June 18 that while the GOS interagency generally supported Slovenian involvement in NTM-I, there was no real champion within the

government pushing this policy forward to ensure continued participation.

15. (C) In a June 27 call to Bozo Cerar, Slovenia's PermRep at NATO and the former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cerar confirmed to COM that there was a "misunderstanding" a few weeks ago regarding talk within the GOS of not participating in NTM-I after the two currently deployed trainers return in August. Cerar told COM that over the past few weeks he has spoken with Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, Defense Minister Karl Erjavec, and Chief of Defense Albin Gutman on the topic and that now there is "general agreement that the mission (in Iraq) should not come to an end."

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SQUARING SLOVENIAN ABILITIES AND NTM-I NEEDS  
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16. (C) Cerar told COM that the deadline for determining how Slovenia can participate in NTM-I beyond August is July 15 and thus, time is short. Saying that "where there's a will there's a way," Cerar asserted that he wants to see continued participation, and echoing Prime Minister Jansa's comments a week earlier, outlined two key restrictions on Slovenian involvement: (1) the profile of the troops needs to be as trainers at NTM-I's Al Rustamiya Base outside of Baghdad, and (2) NTM-I should request trainers in competencies the Slovenes have. Any other profile or location for training would likely require new approval by Parliament, a politically undesirable and potentially unfeasible process

17. (C) To energize the Slovenian interagency debate, DATT has emphasized to the MOD's Defense Policy Director that the U.S. hopes to see Slovenia's continued participation. DATT has also encouraged the MOD to prod Slovenian representatives at SHAPE and NATO to take the initiative and look for a way to extend Slovenia's presence. COM will continue to engage the GOS at senior levels, including CHOD Gutman and MOD Erjavec, over the next few weeks to reinforce this message.

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STRATEGIC AND SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE  
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18. (C) Slovenia's involvement thus far in Iraq is the textbook example of the "quality over quantity" contributions that many of the smaller members of NATO can offer to missions like NTM-I. Its soldiers are generally well trained, highly competent, and speak excellent English. Their successful contributions to NTM-I thus far have been featured on local television and are helping educate the local population about the responsibilities of NATO membership. As other countries were pulling out of the coalition in early 2006, Slovenia's leadership made the politically brave decision to send Slovenes in. Perhaps most importantly, keeping Slovenia involved in the mission in Iraq will be of symbolic importance as Slovenia becomes the first EU newcomer to take over the EU Presidency from January to June 2008. GOS preparations for the EU Presidency are just one part of Slovenia's rapidly expanding international role. Earlier this year Slovenia sent over 600 soldiers to KFOR in Kosovo -- its largest international deployment since independence -- and Slovenes are also represented in peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq, Lebanon, and elsewhere. If the coalition hopes to continue Slovenia's support for NTM-I, NATO and SHAPE may need to give the GOS some attention in Brussels (particularly on technical details) to supplement our efforts here. We (NATO and SHAPE) will have to offer a proposal for its continued participation that will require Slovenia to react positively or negatively.

19. (C) Action Request. To bolster our efforts, we request that USNATO and US representatives at SHAPE reach out again to their Slovenian colleagues to ensure they are considering all possible options for continued involvement in the NTM-I mission. We will do the same here. While the Slovenes have seen the open billets and know what NTM-I's basic needs are, it is clear they need to hear specifically and directly from

SHAPE which jobs they could fill. If asked to fill specific jobs that meet the parameters outlined above, we believe the GOS will be more inclined to renew its support of the mission. As NTM-I continues to evolve, new opportunities for the Slovenes may also be possible. In particular, Slovenia's experience in military police actions could be of some use to the planned Italian-led Gendarmerie force training programs.

¶10. (C) Comment. There is political value in keeping Slovenia in Iraq and we will push hard for the Slovenes to continue to contribute. As MFA officials have said, and others have now confirmed, there is support for continued engagement in Iraq but not a champion within the Slovenian government to assure that continued deployments to NTM-I happen. The Slovenian Ambassador to NATO is close to the Prime Minister and should ultimately understand the importance of Slovenia's continuing involvement at NTM-I. Without USG pressure and support on how it can find a way to contribute that meets NTM-I's needs and the GOS's expertise, there remains the real possibility Slovenian involvement in NTM-I will conclude in August. End Comment.

ROBERTSON